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HOUSEHOLD CALENDAR

A radio talk by Miss Ruth Van Deman, Bureau of Home Economics, delivered in the Department of Agriculture period of the National Farm and Home Hour, broadcast by a network of 48 associate NBC stations, August 30, 1932.

How do you do, Everybody:

Judging by the letters you are writing the Bureau of Home Economics these days, this is a big year for the home preservation of food. Everybody's right on the job, to save the surplus from home orchards and gardens. And next winter, we'll all be welcoming these summer fruits and vegetables as canned products and as jams, jellies, marmalades, and pickles.

You notice I put the pickles last. And they are at the tail of the list in food value. But there's something to food day in and day out besides just food value. And when you think what pickles add in zest and spicy flavor especially when you're holding down the cost of meals and must use a good deal of bread and cereals and potatoes and other bland foods, when you consider this side of the question, then pickles certainly have their place. Even back in 1929 farm women and girls reported that they put up over 1,800,000 quarts of pickles.

So today I'm going to give you some of the pointers on pickle making from Mrs. Yeatman's experiments. I'm sorry that Mrs. Yeatman isn't here herself to do part of the talking.

Clingstone peaches are ripe or are getting ripe now in lots of places. Many women I know who pride themselves on their peach pickles always choose firm-fleshed clings. Crabapples are coming along also, and it won't be long before Seckel pears are ready for pickling. Also it isn't too late to make watermelon rind pickles. You know that old saying "You can't eat your cake and have it too". Nothing disproves it quite so well as watermelon rind pickles. For first you eat the juicy red heart of the melon, and then you turn the green rind into good spicy pickles for winter. If that isn't eating your watermelon and having it too, I don't know what is.

As for vegetables, there's an abundance of cucumbers, tomatoes, peppers, and onions, ready for the pickle jars.

But whether you're making fruit pickles or vegetable pickles, and whether you are making them sweet, sour, mixed, or plain, choose fresh high-quality fruits and vegetables to start with. Then sort your fruit for size and stage of ripeness and cook the ripest in one lot. When you are making chopped vegetable pickles, the size doesn't count, but if you are pickling vegetables whole, get them uniform in size. Then the spicy sirup or vinegar penetrates and seasons them evenly.

And that brings me to one of the main ideas in pickle making. The object of the whole process is to get spicy tart flavor to penetrate through and through the peach, or the cucumber, or whatever it may be. For pickled peaches or crab-

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apple, you do this by cooking the fruit in sirup toned up with vinegar and spice. For cucumbers and many other vegetables, you brine them either by the short method over night or by the long method for about two weeks or so while they ferment and cure. That's the way, for example, to make good crisp dill pickles. The salt draws out the juice of the cucumber slowly. Then brine, well flavored with dill and vinegar, takes the place of the original cucumber juice.

Also with vegetables, you want to develop or keep the texture crisp, also keep as much of the fresh color as possible. No matter how good the flavor may be, flabby, dull-colored pickles are not very appetizing.

Then, important point No. 2 is on the spices. A blend of several kinds of spices gives a much pleasanter, more interesting flavor than a larger quantity of one spice. And remember, the flavor continues to come out of the spices as the pickles stand on the shelves of your storage closet. So don't use too much spice to start with. To help keep the spice from turning the pickles dark, Mrs. Yeatman always rinses off her whole cloves and other whole spices in cold water before she adds them to the sirup or vinegar. In making pickled watermelon rind she ties the spices in a bag and drops that into the boiling sirup as the pickles cook. Then when she puts the pickles into jars to store, she leaves out the spice bag.

Point No. 3 is about the vinegar and sugar. Get good-quality, fresh, clear cider vinegar for pickle making. Or if you are making those little pearly white pickled onions, use distilled vinegar, as clear as water. When vinegar stands and gets cloudy and full of mother, don't use it for pickling.

And for the sugar, use white granulated sugar. Some of the old time pickle recipes call for brown sugar. That was the only kind of sugar people had for common use in those days, and it was often rather precious at that. But brown sugar gives a strong flavor and dark color to pickles, and we don't recommend it in the new pickle recipes.

Cooking pickles, or rather not cooking any longer than you have to, is point No. 4. The minute you step on your neighbor's front porch, you can generally tell it if they're making pickles. But have you ever stopped to think that the more you enjoy the good smell of pickles in the fall, the less of that spicy flavor you'll have when you open the jars next winter? For long cooking actually boils off the delicate "bouquet" of the spices. And it often makes the pickles soft and mushy. Some pickles require no cooking at all, but for those that do, boil them no longer than you must.

And now for the last general suggestion about homemade pickles. It's on storage. If you have a good cold place to store them, probably you can keep them unsealed in stone jars or crocks. But if you have only a rather warm closet, you'll need to seal your pickles in air-tight jars, just as you do other canned goods.

Now, next week we'll talk about quite a different phase of the fruit and vegetable question. Mr. Wells A. Sherman will be here with me to tell you how to buy your commercially canned fruits and vegetables by grade.

Goodbye, for this time.